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Chapter four

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Travel (*rihla*) in Muslim culture is often valued for its integrating effects: the pilgrimage (*hajj*) leads the pilgrim to Mecca and Medina, and the search for knowledge (*talab al'ilm*) leads the student to one of the esteemed places of Islamic teaching, such as Medina, Cairo, or Fez. In all these cases, travel brings individuals and groups to centres and unites them with the wider community of the faithful (*umma*). This chapter considers the consequences of such travel for developing a sense of locality. Did *rihla* serve only to unite the faithful or did it also give to travellers a sense of local consciousness? I suggest that *rihla* is ambivalent: through it the traveller becomes more closely linked to the idea of the Muslim community as a whole, but at the same time learns what is specific to his own people and culture.

Rihla

Rihla, in the form of actual travel and travel accounts, was one of the main features of Muslim culture in the western part of *dar al-Islam* (realm of Islam). Since the early Islamic centuries, learned people ventured to the eastern lands of Islam, specifically to the Hijaz, seeking advanced learning in religious matters and spiritual fulfilment.[1] *Rihla* was particularly linked with the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, the fifth pillar of Islam. The travel was so long and risky that it was worthwhile for the literate to make written records of it which serve as useful guides for future pilgrims.

Rihla literature flourished in North Africa, especially in Morocco (Turki 1979) from the sixteenth century onwards. Muhammad al-Manuni (1983: 186–92), a leading Moroccan archivist, divides *rihla* accounts for the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries into three types:

1 *Rihla* within Morocco, in which the traveller did not go beyond one region or, at the very most, the whole area of what is currently Morocco.
2 *Rihla hijaziyya*, travel to the Hijaz. This form of *rihla* resulted in oral or written comprehensive reports on the travel and on the various aspects of the pilgrimage.
3 *Rihla sifariyya*, including embassies and missions, in which the writer reported on his travels in foreign lands. From the seventeenth century onward, Morocco sent missions to Christian European governments, including France, Spain, and Britain, as well as to Muslim rulers. The most significant embassy travel accounts are those written by ambassadors to the Porte, the Ottoman central government, at Istanbul. These envoys, on their way to accomplish their diplomatic mission or on returning, often performed the *hajj* – thus explaining why many *sifariyya rihlas* are also *hijaziyya* ones. An example is al-Zayyani (d. AH 1249/AD 1834) in the late eighteenth century (al-Zayyani 1967).

Travels to the Hijaz were certainly the most important type of Moroccan movement abroad prior to modern times (Lewis 1971: 37–8). Not only were they the most frequent, but they were also the most comprehensive: the *hijaziyya* type could include the two other kinds of movement. Many pilgrims needed to travel within Morocco before starting the "real" travel towards the east. They needed to do so in order to join the pilgrimage caravan, which used to gather in specific cities before proceeding to the Hijaz, or in order to visit some of the more famous saints' shrines for the sake of safety *en route* in this world and greater rewards in the next (Brunel 1955: 77, 112). The path of pilgrims was rarely direct; it needed to be circuitous to enable them to visit most of the sacred spots on their way (Raphael 1973: 14). Moreover, journeys to the Hijaz were important because they often brought back new ideas or even initiated broad changes in the Maghrib. Examples include the Almoravid and Almohad revolutions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD and the introduction of Wahhabi ideas in the early nineteenth century AD (al-Iraqi 1984: 125–54).

Rihla in both its aspects, *hijaziyya* and *sifariyya*, had two elements. By accomplishing *rihla*, Moroccan travellers shared experiences with various components of the *umma*. At the same time, they were able to understand their difference through experiencing numerous comparisons. To show this characteristic of *rihla*, I will rely mostly on *hijaziyya* accounts because this kind of travel was a more comprehensive undertaking. However, the *sifariyya* accounts are also relevant to developing a conscious sense of

difference. In some cases, the diplomatic and somewhat secular goal of the travel was clearly perceived and expressed, and the sensitivity to differences, especially political ones, may have even been stronger and clearer in these texts than in the *hijaziyya* ones. However, this distinction should not be overdrawn.

Rihla, *umma*, and consciousness of identity

Taking part in *rihla* altered consciousness of the *umma*. There was frequent travel for military, commercial, intellectual, and religious reasons since the early centuries of Islam (see Gellens, Chapter 3 of this volume). Travellers, scholars, and merchants participated in extending the sense of frontiers of the *umma* through their activities. *Rihla* accounts illustrated for local readers and listeners the extent of the Islamic community, and thus created "an integrated, growing, self-replenishing network of cultural communication" (Dunn 1986: 10). This network of cultural communication operated, however, in politically fragmented and socially localised contexts. The case of Morocco is significant in this respect.

Three dimensions characterise Moroccan society prior to the colonial era. On the socio-economic level, most Moroccans lived in small- or medium-sized tribal and village communities. Interaction within these local communities was intense and movement outside of them primarily involved a few seasonal workers or itinerant shepherds (Montagne 1930; Berque 1955).

Politically, the rural areas were more or less linked to the central government, the *makhzan*, which was basically well established in the cities and in the plains surrounding them. In order to function adequately, the central government had to be a travelling institution: the sultans used to settle part of the year in Fez, in the north, and the rest of it in Marrakesh, in the south (Nordman 1980–1: 123–52). Members of the local elites were often ordered to join the sultan in one of these capitals and, in this way, experienced some of the variety of Morocco's lands and people. Rarely, however, did their experiences range beyond the areas of the ruler's peregrinations (El Moudden 1983: 141–5). This administrative and military movement is noticeable in traditional sources at least since the eleventh century in the time of the Almoravid dynasty. Although the geographical extent of the Almoravid and Almohad states encompassed all North Africa and Muslim Spain, it was not until the sixteenth century, with the rise of the Sa'adi dynasty, that Morocco emerged as a distinct political unit more or less possessing its current political boundaries.

Finally, in intellectual and religious matters, religious intellectuals

(*faqihs*) constituted a network cross-cutting Morocco's social and economic fragmentation. This elite of religious intellectuals also constituted an important link between Morocco and the rest of the Muslim world. Since they were among those who were likely to have travelled outside their local areas or regions, in their own localities they were the ones possessing a concrete idea of what the *umma* was like and able to convey this idea to others. A Moroccan from the south-western region of the Sus, Ahmad bin Ali al-Jazuli (d. AH 1197/AD 1782–3), epitomises the different directions of such a network. Al-Jabarti, the late eighteenth century Egyptian historian, wrote in his biography of al-Jazuli:

> He studied with us under the direction of my father, with the participation of Sidi Muhammad and Sidi Abu Bakr, the two sons of Shaykh al-Tawdi bin Suda [a leading scholar of eighteenth-century Fez], when they accompanied their father, that year, on the *hajj*; and with the participation of Shaykh Salim al-Qayrawani [probably from Qayrawan, Tunisia]
>
> (al-Jabarti n.d.: I, 571–2)

This example shows that whether sitting at some corner of al-Azhar in Egypt or al-Qarawiyyin in Morocco, taking part in religious learning still provided an important opportunity for Moroccans from different regions in the late eighteenth century to unite. In this case, al-Jazuli, who was from the Sus in the south of Morocco, encountered at al-Azhar students from Fez (the sons of Bin Suda), others from Tunisia (al-Qayrawani) and still others from Egypt (al-Jabarti). Such encounters occurred frequently and symbolised the network of cultural communication linking men of learning throughout the *umma*. Although al-Jazuli never made it back home, a majority of travellers must have returned to their point of origin with their knowledge and experience, and shared these with their fellow tribesmen or townsmen. As a consequence, awareness of the areas outside the realm of Islam was often due to them (Dunn 1986).

These three spheres of practice and perception in Moroccan society – the socio-economic, political and intellectual, and religious – are clear in traditional sources at least from the sixteenth century onward (al-Nasiri 1954–6: VI, 100). How were these three spheres interconnected?

Imagine al-Tamgruti, the Moroccan ambassador to Istanbul in the late sixteenth century, first in his local environment of Tamgrut, a famous *zawiya* (a religious brotherhood or lodge), located south of the High Atlas mountains on the northern fringe of the Sahara. In terms of society and local economy, he might

have been taking care of his palm groves between prayer times, negotiating and sharing the costs of repairing a *saguia* (irrigation canal), or leading a delegation of members of his village to argue with the members of a village downstream about water rights and shares. Politically, on specific occasions, such as major religious feasts, he might have been ordered to come to wherever the sultan's capital was at that moment. At the intellectual level, he would certainly have met at the capital *faqihs* from other cities and regions of Morocco. He would undoubtedly have talked with recent *hajjs* (customary Moroccan form for *hajjis*, or pilgrims) about their adventures and encounters in the east and about the news from other Muslim lands.

Such an imbrication of the three levels in one personal experience was usual, particularly in the case of learned people, even though the majority of the rest of Moroccans experienced only their immediate environs. In such a socio-cultural environment, travel in its various forms constituted an important means of social, political, and religious integration.

Rihla to the Hijaz was especially important. More than an opportunity for Moroccans to accomplish a long and enriching, though risky, voyage,[2] it also provided a lasting personal experience. This is probably one of the reasons for the flourishing of the *hijaziyya* accounts in comparison to the other types of *rihla* accounts.[3]

For many centuries, the pilgrimage caravan was the most important, if not the only means of travel to the Holy Lands. On their way, Moroccan pilgrims were forced to cross the majority of Arab Muslim lands. This fact alone gives the Moroccan travels a complexity that is reflected in the texts and colours the perception of sacred space and time. Religiously significant dates punctuate the days and months of the journey, as do shrines and important holy centres along the way; they frame the whole narration. The *rihla* of al-'Ayyashi substantiates such an observation: at every stage of his two-year-long travel, he visited shrines and met learned people (al-'Ayyashi AH 1316: I–II; Kopf 1960: 785).

Two very important annual caravans left Morocco for the Hijaz cities – one from Fez, and the other from Sijilmassa, located in the south-east. *Rihla* texts indicate that travellers could quit the caravan in northern or south-eastern Morocco and rejoin it at one of its important stops during the journey – Tripoli, Alexandria, Cairo, Mecca, or Medina. Between each of these stages, the travellers recorded the name and condition of numerous stops of lesser importance.

For each of these stopping points, the *rihla* texts give more or less

detailed descriptions of ecology, wells, sweet or salt water, hot or cold weather, and the ease and safety of the route. The descriptions also focus on some of the economic possibilities of each region and record the kind of trade that the pilgrims may have transacted there. Much attention is paid to the inhabitants' customs as well as to the religious and educational situation. Of course, throughout his text, the traveller kept close records on the most important men, scholars, and saints whom he met in each region, and on various scholarly or *belles-lettres* activities in which he happened to participate. It is for this reason that the *rihla* texts are usually encyclopaedic in character. Among other fields, they cover the religious sciences, history, biographies, and literature. Moreover, for modern scholars, they are a kind of documentary treasure, full of material of geographical, ethnographic, and even technological interest.

The medieval traveller was not, however, an aloof observer, detached from the matter of his depictions. He was often involved in the situation described and the *rihla* text must also be seen as an autobiography.[4] Yet it is not always constituted only by first-hand experience. When the traveller felt a shortage of interesting records about some point of his journey, he drew upon texts to fill the gap (Dunn 1986: 313; Morsy 1983).[5]

Through these various aspects, *rihla* texts testify that the journey to the Hijaz was an important means of integration of Moroccan pilgrims with the wider Muslim community. Moroccan travellers never felt completely foreign towards the inhabitants of the various pilgrimage itineraries. There was no great linguistic handicap for them, at least among the Muslim communities of the southern Mediterranean.[6] Indeed, on their way to the *hajj*, Moroccans sometimes felt so much at home that they considered it quite legitimate to try to impose their views of what they thought to be the right religious behaviour. Al-Jabarti recorded an incident of the sort for the year AH 1110/AD 1696, under the significant heading of "the Maghribi event":

> The Maghribi people of Tunis and Fez, who were accompanying the cloth cover that was to be brought to the *Ka'ba*, in a procession through the central area of Cairo, tried to prevent whoever was smoking, along their way, from doing so . . . This led to a conflict between them and the people of the bazaar of Cairo. The pasha arrested most of them, and consequently they missed the pilgrimage. Some of them died in prison, the others were released later.
>
> (al-Jabarti n.d.: I, 51)

This incident shows that an exaggerated feeling of being at home was not always without complication. It is nevertheless interesting to note that the pilgrims, and specifically the learned people among them, moved easily throughout large areas of the Muslim world.

The example of Ibn Battuta (d. AH 1368) illustrates this basic point. Departing from his native Tangier in northern Morocco, he covered no less than 73,000 miles during his almost thirty-year career. While of course not constantly on the move – he settled long enough in one locale to marry and have a family (Damascus), or to reach positions of authority in the local ruling establishment (India and China) – he was far from isolated. Rather, in India, for example, he was able to meet old acquaintances from Damascus and even Granada. As Dunn says:

> the scholarly class of the Islamic world was an extraordinarily mobile group. In the Maghrib of the later Middle Period the learned, like modern conference hopping academics, circulated incessantly from one city and country to another, studying with renowned professors, leading diplomatic missions, taking up posts in mosques and royal chanceries.
>
> (Dunn 1986: 3, 68; quotation at 24)

As a major factor of individual mobility in pre-modern Muslim societies, the pilgrimage in itself was a complex phenomenon that enabled its participants to share most of everyday life with co-religionists. This journey was not only a religious enterprise, but, because of its length (15–18 months in normal travel, but quite possibly longer as in the cases of al-'Ayyashi and Ibn Battuta), the pilgrims also observed and experienced common practices. For instance, in most of the important stages of the journey, Moroccan pilgrims converted their merchandise or slaves into cash, and purchased the different commodities that they needed for the journey, such as food and animals for transportation. For this reason, many *rihla* texts are in the form of market guides, advising future pilgrims about the best way to carry on advantageous trade on the way to the Hijaz (Zemmama 1984: 114–24). These guides, incidentally, show how business and pilgimage were so intimately connected that it is hard to detemine which one inspired the other.

At the main stages of the journey – Tripoli, Cairo, Mecca, and Medina – the pilgrims stopped for longer periods than they did at secondary places. There they were able to go to libraries, buy books, attend classes at al-Azhar in Cairo, or give lectures at the Prophet's mosque and shrine in Medina. They could also participate, as al-'Ayyashi did (Zemmama 1983: 156–68), in the great religious debates of the time.

Some Moroccan travellers or pilgrims preferred to settle permanently at one point of their journey. Al-Jabarti noted in his chronicles many cases of learned Moroccans who, after their return from the Hijaz, decided to stay in Cairo (n.d.: I, 327, 383, 572). One of them deserves particular attention because he could be seen as an example of how Moroccan travellers considered themselves as members of the larger Muslim community, even in the late eighteenth century – by which time Morocco had been an autonomous political unit for at least 200 years. Ahmad bin 'Ali al-Jazuli al-Susi, previously mentioned, first sought religious learning in his country. In AH 1182/AD 1768 he went on the pilgrimage and, on his way back, stayed in Cairo where, for a period, he studied at al-Azhar. Then he resumed his travels, going this time to the Rum, the central part of the Ottoman Empire. He participated there in a *jihad* (holy war), learned Turkish and was offered a high position in the capital. But, as was expected of a genuine *faqih*, he declined the invitation and returned to Egypt where he married and settled until he died in AH 1197/AD 1782–3 (al-Jabarti n.d.: I, 571–2). Through this example one can see how, in general, the *hajj* and the *rihla* were major ways for Moroccan travellers to realise their connections with other parts of the Muslim world.

One may wonder what impact the *rihla* accounts had on the rest of the people, who either did not go on the pilgrimage or, if they did, were unable to write a record of it. In fact, the pilgrims found a ready audience among those who could read. Among the illiterate, many listened to their long and frequently repeated oral reports. In effect, these travel accounts gave people who had never had the opportunity of leaving their native locality a chance to imagine a wider horizon. At the same time, however, they may have imparted something of the sense of difference from fellow Muslims that the travellers themselves experienced.

Al-'Ayyashi and his travels to the Hijaz: of differences and similarities

Abu Salim 'Abdullah al-'Ayyashi (AH 1037/AD 1628 to AH 1090/AD 1679) was a well-known seventeenth-century Moroccan traveller and scholar. Born in a small village in the eastern High Atlas mountains, his father was the head of the local *zawiya*. Al-'Ayyashi travelled to Fez to acquire the orthodox religious sciences, then went to Tamgrut to be initiated into one of the most active Sufi orders in Morocco at that time, the Nasiriyya (Hammoudi 1980: 615–41). Like many other Moroccan scholars, he soon felt the need to deepen his knowledge in eastern lands. He travelled three

times to the Hijaz – in 1649, 1653, and 1661 – and stayed for long periods in Mecca and Medina, as well as Jerusalem and Cairo. Everywhere, he participated actively in theological debates, both learning and teaching. His feelings and observations are incorporated into his two-volume *rihla* text, *Ma' al-Mawa'id* [*Tables Water*].[7]

The title of this text signifies that the author intended it to be useful for the *'ulama'* in Morocco and elsewhere as well. Although he focused heavily on theological subjects, he was also a keen observer of contemporary life. His text is full of precise comments on many aspects of the social, economic, and political mores of the peoples he met along the way to the Hijaz. Autobiographical information is also scattered throughout the text. Indeed, during his three travel periods, al-'Ayyashi accumulated experiences and knowledge that helped him to constitute a more relative image of himself and his country. As a consequence, his judgements were neither absolutely negative nor completely positive towards such people of the eastern Muslim world as the Egyptians. While criticising some aspects of their lives, he did not omit, of course, to praise some of the positive sides. What remained constant was his sensitivity to differences.

Many of these differences he found insignificant, and treated them much as a tourist would in viewing an exotic scene. Some of them were of great significance, because he understood through them how his customs and even religious rituals differed from those that he was witnessing. While he felt neutral towards, or was even pleased, by the former, he was sometimes frankly embarrassed by the latter.

In Egypt, for example, al-'Ayyashi was struck by the enormous population of Cairo as well as the Nile Valley in general. Its crowded markets and people hurrying in the streets contrasted with what he was accustomed to in the High Atlas region (AH 1316/AD 1898–9: I, 121–2). This was more or less the impression of many previous Moroccan travellers, such as al-'Abdari and Ibn Battuta. Al-'Ayyashi also noticed differences in food habits: for example, drinking coffee was a general and useful habit in Egypt, and it sufficed to make a guest content, but the same was not true for Morocco, where guests expected large meals (1898–9: I, 132–3). He also noted the great attention shown to mosques in Egypt in comparison to the relative neglect accorded to those of Morocco. In general, through his acquaintance with Egypt, he revealed an acute consciousness of the anarchy of Morocco in the 1660s and 1670s due to rivalries between local principalities (1898–9: I, 152).

However, al-'Ayyashi could not help commenting on the negative

characteristics of fellow Muslims. The Egyptians, suffering from lack of pride, endured arbitrary government from the Mamluks without reaction or rebellion (1898–9: I, 121–1). He also disapproved of how Islam had been bureaucratised and corruption was tolerated in Ottoman Medina. He generalised:

> All judiciary offices in eastern lands, whether in Egypt, Syria or the Hijaz, are acquired in return for money. Governors sell the offices of *imam* (prayer leader), *khatib* (sermoniser), *muezzin* (caller to prayer), *qadi* (judge) . . . to whoever offers best, without considering whether he has or not any competence for the office. This results in enormous dangers for Muslims and Islam. Concerning the office of judge, we have not heard, in all eastern lands, of a *qadi* whose judgements rely on the *shari'a* (sacred law). Their judgements depend on bribery, and a verdict may change many times during the same day in relation to the more or less great amount of the bribe.
>
> (1898–9: I, 128)

Al-'Ayyashi related the case of such a *qadi* who wanted to apply the *shari'a* to the affairs of prominent men in Medina, but ended by being assassinated. He concluded: "One can only complain to God" (1898–9: I, 289).

Different ways of organising everyday life were especially disconcerting:

> The teachers' custom in Medina is to vacation on Tuesdays and Fridays and classes meet on the other days, contrary to our custom of vacationing on Thursdays and Fridays in Morocco. When I was teaching in the Haram [Medina], they forced me to teach on Thursdays. It was hard for me because it was different from what we were accustomed to . . . I asked them and insisted upon replacing Thursdays with Tuesdays, but they obstinately refused. I was forced to follow their custom.
>
> (1898–9: I, 289)

Al-'Ayyashi could only console himself by reciting a verse of poetry: "If you come to a land in which all people are blind/Close your eye, even if you have only one eye!"

The differences noted by al-'Ayyashi include prayer ritual. In the Maliki school of law, Muslims let their arms down while standing in prayer, whereas, in the other schools, worshippers fold their arms on their chests. But this latter custom soon spread to eastern lands including those where the Maliki school had influence. It widely came to be assumed that only heretical people (*rafidi*) let their arms down. Al-'Ayyashi noted the ironic case of a western

Maliki accused, in a Syrian village, of being heretical for precisely that reason, even though his accusers were Maliki themselves (1989–9: I, 292).

Often comparisons are realised through a theological challenge. It was customary for western Maliki *faqihs* to become involved in debates about the *hadith* (Prophet's traditions), and many of them like to report that they found their antagonists' knowledge weak. True to this tradition, al-'Ayyashi reported how in Jerusalem he outwitted an Egyptian Hanafi scholar, who was believed to be very learned (1898–9: II, 321–2).

In some paragraphs, al-'Ayyashi generalised his comparisons:

> Nomads of Darb, Hijaz, Tihama and Najd are the most ignorant and tough people among Arabs. Only few of them care about prayers or Ramadan. Common people, Arabs and Berbers, in our Morocco, are *faqihs* in comparison to them. In Morocco, no one, however ignorant he might be, and even if illiterate, would be ignorant about how to do his prayers.
>
> (al-'Ayyashi 1898–9: I, 313)

Here we meet the subjective aspect of comparison. When al-'Ayyashi decided to stay in Mecca for a long period, he justified it by saying that Mecca was the homeland for all the faithful. But, in the last pages of his *rihla* account, he showed just how deeply he was longing to return home: his thirty-month stay abroad seemed as if it had been a whole century (1898–9: II, 418). Within the *umma*, therefore, al-'Ayyashi felt closer identification to his own country and people, for the things that differentiated him from eastern peoples were exactly those that linked him to his compatriots in Morocco.

Al-Tamgruti and his *rihla* to Istanbul: competition over the *umma*

If we look at another Moroccan, but of the sixteenth century, we will find similar sentiments. I have avoided choosing the text of another eighteenth-century traveller for two reasons: first, the chronological development of the themes in *rihla* literature is not my principal concern here; second, by the eighteenth century, Morocco and the Ottoman Empire had reached a kind of *modus vivendi* and *rihla* texts were less interested in expressing difference and competition.

The text of Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali al-Tamgruti is one of the earliest accounts of Moroccan–Ottoman relations in the late sixteenth century, when competition over legitimacy within the *umma* was still intense. Reading through *Kitab al-Nafha al-Miskiyya fi'l-Sifara*

al-Turkiyya [*The Book of the Musky Breeze of the Embassy to Turkey*] serves to indicate his reactions to the numerous aspects and events of his travel to Istanbul in 1589–90. He travelled there as the ambassador of the Sa'di Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur (ruled 1578–1603) to the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (ruled 1574–95).

H. de Castries stated in his introduction to the French translation of the *Nafha* that little is known about al-Tamgruti outside of what we can infer from his own *rihla* account (al-Tamgruti/de Castries 1929: iv). Born about 1560 in Tamgrut, he died in 1594 or 1595 in Marrakesh. He belonged to the region in which the Sa'di dynasty originated and might thus have been expected to be unconditionally faithful to Sultan al-Mansur.

Al-Tamgruti provided us with an interesting insight into the relations between his family and the Sa'di dynasty when he wrote (1929: 45) that his late brother, Sidi Muhammad, had been sent as ambassador to the Ottoman lands before him. We can infer from this detail that al-Tamgruti's family was in charge of an inherited office that involved diplomacy between Morocco and Istanbul. At any rate, we can safely assume that al-Tamgruti was acquainted with Ottoman affairs well before his mission, especially through his brother's accounts (1929: 45). The knowledge of the Ottoman provinces, Istanbul, and Ottoman society and state that is contained in his travel account did not therefore depend on first-hand experience alone, but was representative of what was known of the Ottomans among prominent families of the Sa'di regime.

Al-Tamgruti said nothing of the real purpose of his official mission. Were the contents of the mission top secret? Or were oral reports on such matters more common? We simply do not know why al-Tamgruti's account is silent here, but on other matters, such as itineraries and cities that he visited, he was prolix. He said of Istanbul: "In this city, there are so many people, craftsmen, properties, commodities, stores, and books that the traveller is struck by their number, which only God could count and know" (al-Tamgruti n.d.: 94; al-Tamgruti/de Castries 1929: 54). The size of the city and the variety of its activities were so unlike what he had known and so fascinated him that his colourful descriptions remind us of modern *cartes postales* of Istanbul.

The author's general reaction to the Ottomans alternated between fascination and rejection. Al-Tamgruti was fascinated by the strength and power of the empire; after all, the Ottoman sultan was the most important Muslim ruler, able to oppose and fight the Christians. The same fascination could be noticed in his sensitivity to the language spoken by the Turks: in many places, he made

specific comments on the rules of Turkish grammar (al-Tamgruti 1929: 85, 99, 103).

At the same time, al-Tamgruti clearly recognised his difference from the Ottomans, particularly in matters of law. Yet, surprisingly for a *faqih*, he did not record the name of any scholar during his six-month stay in Istanbul. He only wrote: "we attended the seminars of scholars who were in Istanbul and we learned many things from them" (al-Tamgruti/de Castries 1929: 68). It is possible that, as a Maliki, he was reluctant to detail the Hanafi school and its scholars, as he had done for the Maliki scholars of Tunis. Speaking of the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) taught in Istanbul, he merely concluded: "they teach their law" (*fiqhuhum*).

On the political level, he expressed his rejection of the style of Ottoman rule much more clearly. When he was still on his way to Istanbul, he witnessed a rebellion among the Arab tribes in the countryside of Tripoli (al-Tamgruti/de Castries 1929: 31–4; Hess 1978: 113–14), which afforded him the opportunity to record Ottoman practices:

> As a matter of fact, the Turks had oppressed the inhabitants of Tripolitania very much. They had devastated the country with cruelty, depriving people of part of their lands and houses and ransacking their wealth. They had been so unrespectful to Muslim women that, if they liked a girl, be she the daughter of a notable or of a prominent man, no one could have prevented them from [marrying] her. It was impossible to marry her to someone else.
>
> (al-Tamgruti/de Castries 1929: 32–3)

As a consequence, many of the North African Arabs, from Egypt to Ifriqia (Tunisia), were turning their eyes towards the ruling dynasty in Morocco:

> We have noticed among them an extraordinary willingness to being ruled by the *sharifs*, our lords. They want to share peace, equity, mercy and benefits that the Maghribis [Moroccans] enjoy thanks to [the *sharifs*].
>
> (al-Tamgruti/de Castries 1929: 33)

We should not forget that it was a member of the Sa'di regime who was speaking; a laudatory style would not have been unexpected. Nevertheless, these paragraphs go further and make a substantial claim for the Moroccan dynasty: because the *sharifs* were, or proclaimed themselves to be, descendants of the Prophet, they were the true caliphs. This is clearly shown in the text when al-Tamgruti contrived to speak of the Ottoman sultan and the Sa'di sultan in the same sentence:

Montagne, R. (1930) *Les Berbères et le Makhzen dans le sud du Maroc*, Alcan, Paris.
Morsy, M. (1983) *La relation de Thomas Pellow, une lecture du Maroc au 18ième Siecle*, Edition Recherche sur les civilisations, Paris.
El Moudden, A. (1983) 'Etat et société rurale à travers la *harka* au Maroc du XIX Siècle', *Maghreb Review*, 8, pp. 141–5.
Motylinksi (1900) *Itinéraires entre Tripoli et l'Egypte*, Algiers.
al-Nasiri, A. (1954–6) *al-Istiqsa*, vol. 6, Casablanca.
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5 This vice, however, seems to be common to travel accounts in other cultures. See Morsy (1983).

6 It is worth noticing that such a feeling is still at work today. In a recent interview, Faqih al-Basri, one of the most radical leaders of the opposition to the Moroccan monarchy during the last twenty-five years, answered a question in these words:

> *Question*: "Le pays a dû vous manquer . . . ?"
> *Réponse*: "Bien sûr le Maroc me manque . . . J'étais loin de mon village, de mes racines, mais j'évoluais dans une partie plus vaste que j'ai appris à découvrir et à aimer . . . le croyant est partout chez lui en terre d'Islam."
> (See *Jeune Afrique*, 15 July 1987, no. 1384, p. 24)

7 Al-'Ayyashi's *rihla* is only partially translated into French: Berbrugger 1846 and Motylinksi 1900.

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